

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
San Luis Valley Field Office  
1313 E. Hwy. 160  
Monte Vista, CO 81144**

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

**NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-CO-FO30-2016-0009 CX

**CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER** (optional):

**PROJECT NAME:** McIntire Decadent Willow Mowing

**PLANNING UNIT:**

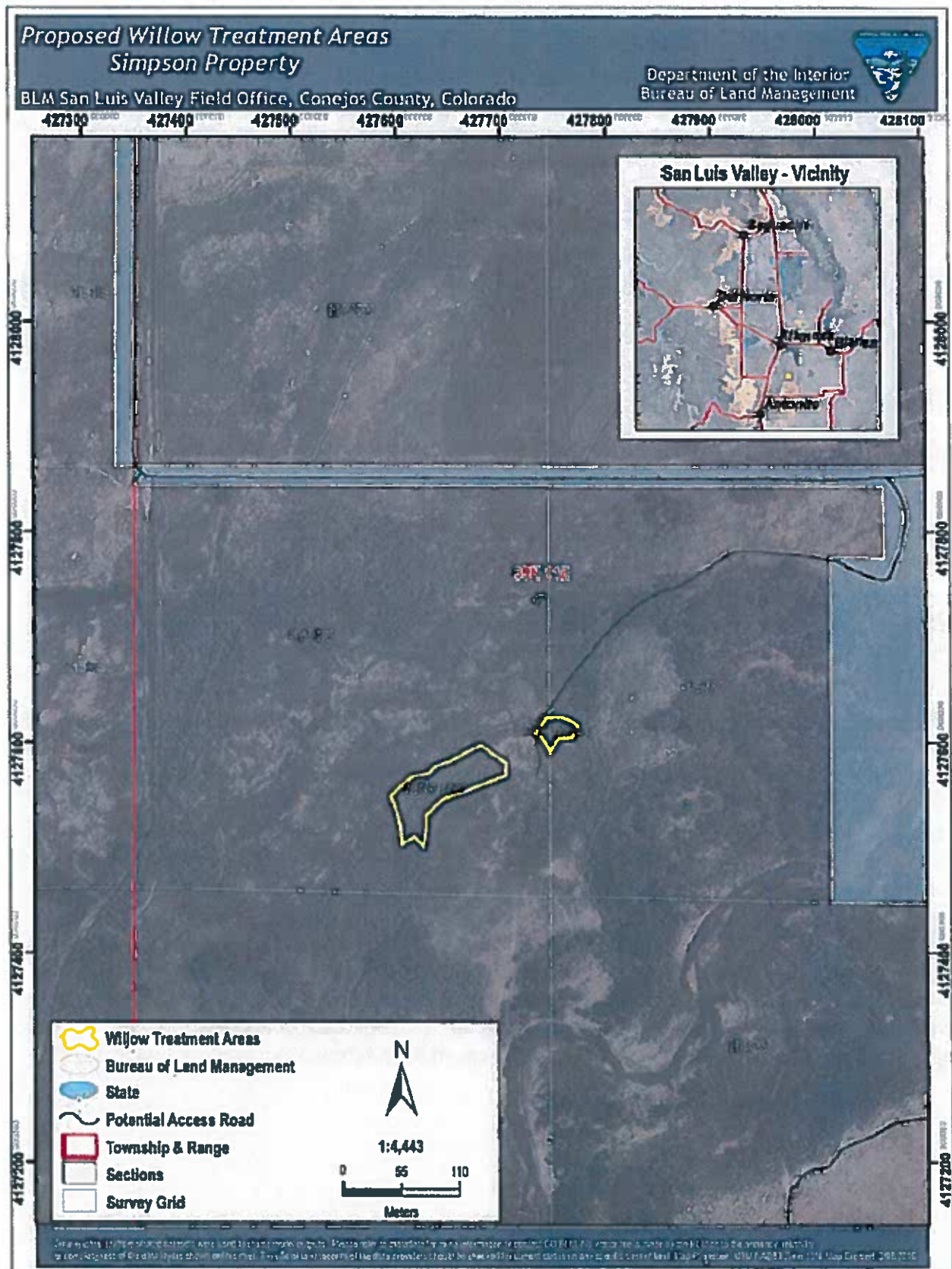
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** (T.35N, R. 11E, S. 7)

**APPLICANT:** BLM

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:** The Bureau of Land Management proposes to mow two patches of decadent coyote willow totaling two acres on the McIntire property using a skid-steer with an attached hydroaxe (**Map 1**).

The purpose of this mowing operation is to enhance the establishment, growth, spread, and survival of the coyote willow. Currently, due to disturbance, age, and drought conditions, many patches of willow habitat on the McIntire property have become decadent. Coyote willow, which is the dominant species at the two locations, is a relatively short lived species, and cyclic disturbance is necessary for regeneration. Due to the Conejos River having controlled flows, there is no natural disturbance from flooding within the riparian corridor, and other forms of habitat management are necessary for regeneration, such as fire and mechanical treatments.

Because the project area is designated critical habitat for the Federally Endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, which depends on dense willow habitat for breeding, the purpose of the project is not only to improve riparian vegetative conditions, but to improve the habitat conditions and spatial arrangement of willow for this endangered species. All mowing operations will take place outside the breeding season for Southwestern Willow Flycatchers.



**Map 1.**

### PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

Name of Plan: San Luis Valley Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: December 18, 1991

Decision Number: Vegetation, page 13 in the Resource Condition Objective Decisions 1-5, Wildlife and Fish Habitat Management, page 14 in the Resource Condition Objective Decisions 1-10, Special Status Plant and Animal Values, page 17 in the Resource Condition Objective Decision 1-29.

Decision Language: Vegetation 1-5: *Allow vegetative manipulation such as mechanical, chemical, or fire practices to aid in accomplishing the overall objective and the desired plant communities described in activity plans.*

Wildlife and Fish Habitat Management 1-10: *Manage the wetland component of the riparian system in a good to excellent condition.*

Special Status Plant and Animal Values 1-29: *Provide management to enhance, recover, or reestablish special status plant and animal values.*

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: This proposed action is listed as a Categorical Exclusion in DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11.9 D (10). None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Exclusion Criteria	YES	NO
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; lands with wilderness characteristics; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on		X

the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		X
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		X
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		X

### INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW

NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Jill Lucero	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds, Fisheries	JRL 4/13/16
Melissa Shawcroft	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	MS 4/13/16
Jill Lucero	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands/Fisheries	JRL 4/13/16
Eduardo Duran	NRS	Riparian, T&E Plant species, Noxious Weeds	END 4/11/2016
Rebecca Morris	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	RSM 4/11/2016
Negussie Tedela	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils, Air Quality	NHT 4/11/2016
Leon Montoya	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	LM 4-11-16
Sean Noonan	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers,	STN 4/12/16
Martin Weimer	NEPA Coordinator	Environmental Justice, Noise, SocioEconomics	mw, 4/13/16
Brian Fredericks	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	BAF, 4-13-2016
Leon Montoya	Realty Specialist	Realty	LM, 4-11-16
Paul Minow	Fire Management Spec.	Fire, Fuels	PSM, 4/11/16

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: The proposed undertaking will have no effect on any historic properties as there will be no ground disturbing activities.

Native American Religious Concerns: No Native American concerns.

Threatened and Endangered Species: Threatened and Endangered species of concern in this area are the federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. The project design promotes restoration of decadent willow in patches where these species have not been detected in 8 years of intensive survey work completed on the site by BLM personnel. The lack of detection in this habitat could be a result of the late seral stage of the willow, which is over 80% dead. This project would provide a mechanism for BLM biologists to evaluate the effectiveness of treating willow in an area where these species occupy the adjacent habitat and determine if treating willow with mulching could result in occupation of this suitable habitat in the future. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service occurred on 3/16/16 (see project file). The letter provides concurrence that they project "May effect, but is not likely to adversely effect" the endangered or threatened species or their habitat. The project design avoids treatment during the breeding season to further minimize impacts. Because of the small scale of the project and the seasonal restrictions, the project will not adversely affect nor negatively impact any threatened, endangered, or sensitive species on the site.

COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional):

NAME OF PREPARER: Stefan Armenta, Natural Resources Student Trainee

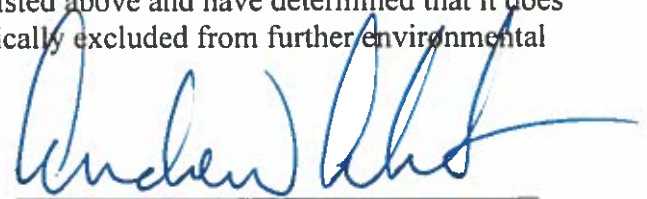
NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Martin Weimer, NEPA Coordinator

DATE: 4/13/16

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this Categorical Exclusion and have decided to implement the Proposed Action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 10 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Andrew Archuleta, Field Office Manager

DATE SIGNED: \_\_\_\_ 14 April 2016 \_\_\_\_

